TWO POINTS OF VIEW

THE minister lingered on the doorstep before knocking. It was a house that he always entered reluctantly now. When parents deliberately put themselves beyond the reach of comfort, it is a heart-breaking task to attempt to console them. Two years had passed since the only son of that household had made the Great Sacrifice. Now the armistice and the general hope of a secure peace seemed only to deepen the perpetual shadow on the home. Neither mother nor father could see one gleam of glory in the gray. The general rejoicing added only bitterness to their grief.

As the minister knocked he heard a step, and a young soldier, home on leave, came up to the door—a fine, strapping, healthy lad who had seen much service and who had been a close friend of the boy those people mourned. Together they entered the house and greeted its mistress.

Half an hour later they left it together.

For some moments they walked in silence. Presently the soldier remarked, "How it would hurt Sam to know his people had taken it like that!" The minister assented sadly. The boy swung round and looked him square in the face as he said hotly, "She made me feel as if I had no right to come home or be alive!"

Before that day had ended, the minister called at another house. Briskly he approached the door and rang without hesitation or fear, for in this house a new glory seemed to dwell.

The new spirit had come just a month before the armistice, when the news arrived that the only son and heir, a youth of brilliant promise, had been killed at the front. The parents had not been very religious until then. But when the dear form they loved so well had pierced "the darkling veil between" it was as if their eyes and hearts had followed him. A new assurance of the spiritual world and a new discovery of the spiritual life became theirs. Of course they grieved at first, but they resolutely set their minds to gauge the meaning of his and their sacrifice, and especially were they careful to keep a brave smile and a hearty good will all through the armistice celebrations. "For," they said, "it was this he died to bring about."

The minister remembered vividly one occasion when he had commiserated the father upon his loss. The man replied, "I don't grieve now. Here am I almost an old man, and all my life I've longed to do something noble and definite to bless the world. I tell you, I envy my boy his splendid chance and the brave way he took it."

As the minister walked from the house after his call, there sounded solemnly and grandly in his soul the words: "Beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

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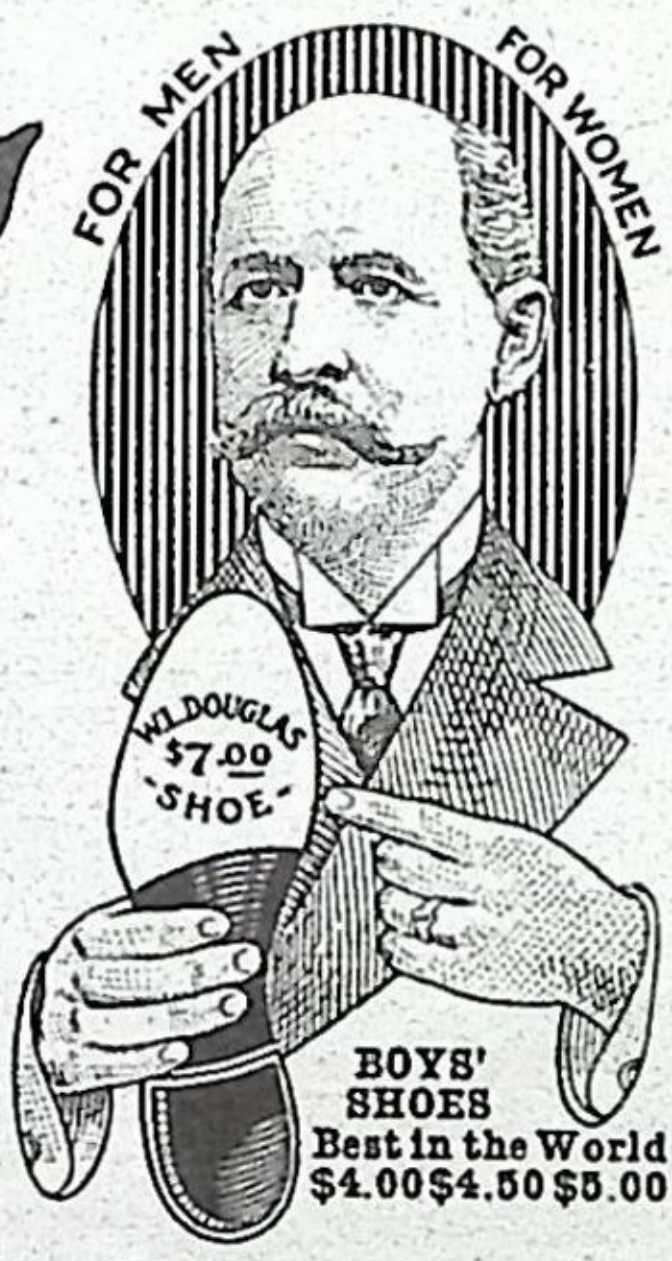

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